

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) In a baseball videogame, wherein animated action is performed by a pitcher character in response to input by a user provided through a user-operable controller, a method of controlling game play comprising:

beginning the pitcher character's wind-up;

after the pitcher character's wind-up has begun, monitoring for user input on the user-operable controller indicating that a pitch is to be released ~~requesting release of a baseball pitch~~ by the pitcher character;

detecting when user input is requested on the user-operable controller requesting release of the baseball pitch by the pitcher character;

comparing a time at which the user input is detected to an optimal pitch release timing;

releasing the pitch corresponding to the time at which the user input is detected since the pitcher character's wind-up has begun; and

controlling a timing of a break on the baseball pitch based on the comparison.

2. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the timing of the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively early in its flight when the time at which the user input is detected occurs earlier than the optimal pitch release timing.

3. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the timing of the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively late in its flight when the time at which the user input is detected occurs at or during the optimal pitch release timing.

4. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the timing of the break on the baseball pitch will result in the pitch being outside of a batter character's strike zone when the time at which the user input is detected occurs after the optimal pitch release timing.

5. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the optimal pitch release timing is a period of time.

6. (original) The method of claim 5 wherein the amount of time in the period of time forming the optimal pitch timing is variable.

7. (original) The method of claim 6 wherein the amount of time in the period of time is varied based on performance statistics of the pitcher character.

8. (original) The method of claim 6 wherein the amount of time in the period of time is varied based on a type of pitch selected by input on the user-operable controller that controls the action performed by the pitcher character.

9. (currently amended) A method of controlling game play in a baseball videogame, wherein a user interactively controls a pitcher character in response to input by a user provided through a user-operable controller, the method comprising:

beginning the pitcher character's wind-up;

after the pitcher character's wind-up has begun, monitoring for user input

on the user-operable controller requesting release of a baseball pitch by the pitcher character;

detecting when user input is requested on the user-operable controller requesting release of the baseball pitch by the pitcher character;

comparing a time at which the user input is detected to an optimal pitch release timing;

releasing the pitch corresponding to the time at which the user input is detected since the pitcher character's wind-up has begun; and  
controlling when a break on the baseball pitch occurs during its flight based on the comparison.

10. (original) The method of claim 9 wherein the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively early in its flight when the time at which the user input is detected occurs earlier than the optimal pitch release timing.

11. (original) The method of claim 9 wherein the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively late in its flight when the time at which the user input is detected occurs at or during the optimal pitch release timing.

12. (original) The method of claim 9 wherein the break on the baseball pitch will result in the pitch being outside of a batter character's strike zone if the time at which the user input is detected occurs after the optimal pitch release timing.

13. (original) The method of claim 9 wherein the optimal pitch release timing is a period of time.

14. (original) The method of claim 13 wherein an amount of time in the period of time forming the optimal pitch timing is variable.

15. (original) The method of claim 14 wherein the amount of time in the period of time is varied based on performance statistics of the pitcher character.

16. (original) The method of claim 14 wherein the amount of time in the period of time is varied based on a type of pitch selected by input on the user-operable controller that controls the action performed by the pitcher character.

17. (currently amended) In a baseball videogame, wherein animated action is performed by a pitcher baseball game character in response to input by a user provided through a user-operable controller, a method of controlling game play comprising:

generating a display of the pitcher character's wind-up;

concurrent with the display of the pitcher character's wind-up, displaying

and activating a pitch release meter so that the pitch release meter approaches a

target as the pitcher character's windup progresses;

as the pitcher character's windup progresses, monitoring for user input on the user-operable controller requesting release of a baseball pitch by the pitcher character;

detecting the position of the release meter when user input is requested on the user-operable controller requesting release of the baseball pitch by the pitcher character;

comparing the detected position of the release meter to the target;

generating a display of the pitcher character's release of the pitch, the display of the release corresponding to the time the user input is detected as the pitcher character's windup progresses; and

controlling when a break on the baseball pitch occurs during its flight based on the comparison.

18. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively early in its flight if the detected position of the release meter has not yet reached the target.

19. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively late in its flight if the detected position of the release meter is at or within the target.

20. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein the break on the baseball pitch will result in the pitch being outside of a batter character's strike zone when the detected position of the release meter has passed the target.

21. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein the target comprises a target zone.

22. (original) The method of claim 21 wherein a range of the target zone is variable.

23. (original) The method of claim 22 wherein the range of the target zone is varied based on performance statistics of the pitcher character.

24. (original) The method of claim 23 wherein the range of the target zone is varied based on a type of pitch selected by input on the user-operable controller that controls the action performed by the pitcher character.

25.-103. (canceled)

104. (new) In a baseball videogame, wherein animated action is performed by a pitcher character in response to input by a user provided through a user-operable controller, a method of controlling game play comprising:

generating a display of the pitcher character's wind-up;

after the display of the pitcher character's wind-up has begun, monitoring for user input on the user-operable controller indicating that a pitch is to be released by the pitcher character;

detecting when user input is requested on the user-operable controller requesting release of the baseball pitch by the pitcher character;

comparing a time at which the user input is detected to an optimal pitch release timing;

displaying release of the pitch at the time the user input is detected, the ball being released at a release point based at least on how long until the user input is detected since the pitcher character's wind-up has begun; and

controlling a timing of a break on the baseball pitch based on the comparison.

105. (new) The method of claim 104 wherein the timing of the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively early in its flight when the time at which the user input is detected occurs earlier than the optimal pitch release timing.



106. (new) The method of claim 104 wherein the timing of the break on the baseball pitch occurs relatively late in its flight when the time at which the user input is detected occurs at or during the optimal pitch release timing.

107. (new) The method of claim 104 wherein the timing of the break on the baseball pitch will result in the pitch being outside of a batter character's strike zone when the time at which the user input is detected occurs after the optimal pitch release timing.

108. (new) The method of claim 104 wherein the optimal pitch release timing is a period of time.

109. (new) The method of claim 108 wherein the amount of time in the period of time forming the optimal pitch timing is variable.

110. (new) The method of claim 109 wherein the amount of time in the period of time is varied based on performance statistics of the pitcher character.

111. (new) The method of claim 109 wherein the amount of time in the period of time is varied based on a type of pitch selected by input on the user-operable controller that controls the action performed by the pitcher character.